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VOL. 1.

STE. GENEVIEVE, THURSDAY, OCT. 17, 1872.

NO. 20.

Selected Miscellany.

A MIDDLE-AGED LOVE STORY.

They had come a little group of friendly faces, to wealth me off, with waving handkerchiefs and kindly good-bys; and I stood on the stern, nodding and waving back, till the steamer swept down the river out of their sight.

I knew I should have their prayers, that the great sea might be gentle with me; I knew they would watch the weather, and look for the telegram of the arrival of our ship; yet I knew I was taking nothing from their lives, and that they each would go home hardly missing me; so it was with no great wrench of heart that I saw the pilot put off from us, and took the last look at my native shores.

During most of the passage I was just comfortable sea-sick, so I sat all the day long in a reclining chair on deck, watching the white caps on the purple and green and blue waves that mounted and fell, down and up, up and down, away out to the far horizon. I saw the shining nautilus float by, and now and then a whale, or a shoal of porpoises, or a sail speeding white and full across the water.

I saw also a good many other things nearer by; for I didn't put my eyes in my pocket along with my short-sighted glasses; and nobody was much likely to mind a middle-aged woman in hood and waterproof.

The first thing I saw was a young girl, with dark eyes, and brown hair that rippled itself into a tangle of rough curls whenever she took off her net. She was not so very brilliant, but there was a piquant charm about her that attracted half the passengers before the first day was over. By the end of the second day, everybody, from the captain to the ship's surgeon, and from the surgeon to the cabin-boy was eager to show her attention; and everybody was met by the same genial smile and lively retort.

She won her way at once into my heart by the kindly thought that led her to bring little trifles from the table to tempt my sickly appetite, and to soothe my forehead with water and gentle touches of her shapely brown hands, where a great emerald glittered, encircled by diamonds. Very soon she got into the habit of drawing her rug beside my chair, and sitting on the deck leaning against me, so that I might "pet her," as she said.

This was how it happened that my quiet, out-of-the-way corner came to be the center of the life and gaiety and romance of the whole shipboard.

It seemed this young girl, Rosa Armour, was an only child and an orphan, going to an uncle in Germany, her nearest of kin.

"Dear Heart! I hope her uncle will be wise as well as loving," said I to myself very often; for she seemed too fragile a hubble of humanity to drift on through life alone.

The tips of her brown curls were lighter than the rest; and here and there were little bright touches all over her hair, as though the sun was shining in spots on it. One morning I sat coiling these gleams of sunshine around my fingers, and watching a flock of Mother Carey's chickens skim restlessly over the restless water, thinking these thoughts about Rosa, an having her soft presence alone to myself for a few moments. Not many, however; soon, up came a New Zealander; of course there was a New Zealander, or an Australian on our boat.

"You are very lowly, Miss Armour," said he. "Let me bring you a chair."

"Thank you; I prefer to sit here on my rug, and have Miss Wells pet me," replied Rosa, turning up her eyes languidly. "The deck is my favorite seat, if I can only have an excuse to sit on it."

"But you need something over you," persisted the New Zealander, going away, and coming back directly

with his own heavy gray wrap. Then he seated himself on a low camp-stool beside her, folding the wrap over the two. "I never saw so rough a sea as this all the way from Honolulu to San Francisco," said he, looking out upon the gentle swell of the lazily-mounting waves.

"Rough," cried Miss Armour. "I am sure the ocean is as smooth as a millpond?"

"Oh! but not as compared to the Pacific—perfection, it was rightly named. We have never such gales on that as sweep the Atlantic, but only the gentlest westerly breezes." The New Zealander shivered as he spoke, and drew his wrap closer over his knees. "We have the most charming climate in New Zealand," he went on; we are never too hot, an to never cold. In fact, we never think of the weather. And the soil is the most fertile in the world."

"Pity it is in such an out-of-the-way part of the earth that nobody can live there," said Miss Armour.

"Beg your pardon, miss; there are several English towns of thirty thousand inhabitants each; and we never think of ourselves as being out-of-the-way, but rather feel sorry for those who live so far off," returned the other, bending his tall figure earnestly forward.

Rosa leaned her pretty head towards him in a confiding attitude of interest, and laughed. "Oh, so you are the people, and, wisdom is going to die with you," said she. "But what do you do out there in the heart of the universe?"

"We dig gold for one thing, and raise sheep for another—millions and millions of them; from thirty to forty vessels are constantly plying to England with the tallow and pressed wool."

"What do you do with all that mutton?" asked Rosa, looking idly at the light in her ring, and then as idly at the light in the speaker's eyes.

"We use what we can," was the reply; "and sometimes, I am sorry to say, we bury the flesh—not usually; but sometimes an order will come to a farmer for a thousand sheep if you please; and all he can do is to clip off the wool, get out the fat, and bury the carcasses."

"What a pity the meat can't be sent to the hungry poor at home! Why don't somebody condense it as they do the beef in Texas? I said in my practical way."

"In good time I dare say somebody will; but we can't do everything at once," replied the New Zealander, looking with sudden interest at the game of shuffle-board being played beside us.

Just the along came the ship's surgeon, a blonde youth in uniform, with his hair parted in te middle.

"Miss Armour," said he, "the gun is to be fired off at the bow; will you come and see it done?"

Miss Armour started up at once, turning the same half-confiding glance and ready smile upon him she had been giving us.

"I am going to leave my rug with you; I shall come back," said she, beaming over her shoulder upon me as she took the surgeon's arm and went away.

The new Zealander looked after her, tried hard to console himself by drawing his wrap in another fold across his knees, did not succeed, and finally got up and went away. Of course it was not worth his while to make himself agreeable to a middle-aged woman in hood and waterproof. So I sat and looked at the likeness of a lake among the sunset clouds, and tried to decide whether I had better take oat-meal gruel or biscuit tea for my supper; wondering the while half unconsciously, about the old chord in my memory that was always being struck by a certain musical ring in the New Zealander's voice.

After an hour or so the gun was fired; and presently Miss Armour came back, with the disorder of the sea wind in her hair, and its freshness in her pretty pink cheeks.

"I've come as I said," she said

mured, dropping at my feet again, and smiling up, as though she had got where she best loved to be, just such a smile as she would have given the stokers down in the engine room, or to the ship's cat. But it was lovely to look upon while it lasted; and we middle-aged people have learned to warm ourselves in any chance ray of sunlight, without stopping to consider whether it is likely to be perpetual.

This time the bit of sunshine did no stay long, for there came up an artist with his sketch book; and when Miss Armour had sufficiently admired his graphic pencilings of the captain and the quartermaster, and the sea-sick occupant of an upper berth, it was time to throw the log; and so he bore her off, to find out by her own eyes whether we were actually going at the rate of thirteen knots, or only twelve and a half.

That was how the days went. The passengers read and paced the deck, played games or guessed riddles, and were always hungry; the pilot stood steady and firm at the wheel; the sailors ran up and down about the rigging like overgrown spiders, and were forever scouring and scrubbing, tying and untying, drawing up and letting down. Thus at last we had come safely almost to our desired haven. With fair sailing, we were only one day out from port; and, found as we had grown to be of each other, we were getting impatient to part.

Miss Armour, during all the voyage, had kept as she had begun, beguiling every one with her trick of lip and eye. They ran after her like boys at the string of a kite. Well, they had nothing better to do just then; and when she had faded out, as the rainbow fades, I made no doubt she would be easily forgotten, or only remembered as a midsummer's day-dream, by all unless it might be a solitary, warm-hearted man like a New Zealander. Tell the truth, I was a little sorry for him. Evidently, life had not brought him all it might and he was hungry for the love and confidence that had never been his. So I was afraid he would miss this little sparkle of girlhood and warm youth, and find the void deeper when it had gone out.

To the very last day, Rosa kept her place by my chair; and to the very last the New Zealander kept his place by her, when no one younger stepped in to carry her off, which was pretty often to be sure. Then, he always quietly went away himself, with a kind of grave regret in his face. On this last morning, Miss Armour had just left us, along with a young lawyer, to drop oranges and lemons among the steerage passengers, when I noticed the New Zealander looking after her with a sadder regret than usual—almost a pain—in his eyes. He had such handsome dark eyes! I could see that without my glasses.

"Now," said I to myself, "I hope he isn't going to get soft—a sensible, gentlemanly, agreeable man like him, and quite old enough to be her father!" And so I looked at him to see if he was, when suddenly he turned upon me.

"At least, you might have written, Agatha Wells!" said he, sharply.

I started, as you may think, to hear my own name spoken so familiarly by a stranger; when, looking again, behold! I saw beneath the bronze, and under the wrinkles and behind the beard, a face that twenty years before was the dearest in the world to me—the face of Duncan Ashley! We parted one day expecting to meet on the next; but that evening he was called away, and wrote instead of coming. In his letter he said, what he had said before with his eyes—yes, those same beautiful eyes—that I was the choice of his heart and the desire of his life.

"Answer me," said he, "I cannot wait till I see you." So I answered—a long, foolish letter, though there was no need of writing; for he had read all I could say long before, with those eyes of his. Then I watched for him; but never saw him or heard one word more. If you are young, you can imagine the slow dying out of hope and expectation; and if you are old, you know how such things can be lived over, and hidden in secret graves.

But now, as though the graves had been opened, and the judgement set, came this sudden reproachful question up from the buried past. I fairly caught my breath, as I turned back my eyes, and looked him in the face again.

"Forgive me," said he directly, in a gentler tone. "I did not mean to speak. You brought it out with your

eyes; that questioning turn was so familiar. Of course you were quite right, and I never blamed you. I never meant you to see me again; but the temptation to feel myself beside you, only to be in the soothing charm of your presence, was too great. It has been a blessing, I shall carry with me all the rest of my life."

He was rising to go away, but I put out my hand. "I did write, Duncan Ashley," said I, "the letter must have gone wrong."

"You did! You wrote!" he cried, sinking back in his chair again, and looking at me eagerly. "What did you say?"

"There was only one thing I could say; and I said that. I answered, blushing as though I had just written the letter."

A middle-aged woman in hood and waterproof! But, dear me! it was only my face that was mild and aged, after all; my heart was as young and silly as ever. And as for Duncan's face, the marks of care, and thought, and time left off, leaving in it only the eternal youth of love.

It was the old story of a lost letter, and the older story of a proud man believing himself rejected and humiliated, and fleeing to the ends of the earth with his pain.

"Twenty precious years wasted!" said my New Zealander. "We will not be separated another day while we both live. There is a clergyman among our passengers and we will be married this very hour."

That was so like his headlong decisions! Certainly he did need sober second thought like me, for ballast. "That cannot be!" I cried. "The ceremony would be legal without a license or something. And I would by no means do anything so sensational or conspicuous."

But, bless your heart! I might as well have tried to wipe up the Atlantic with my pocket handkerchief. He was so gripped, and so impatient (and, indeed, when one comes to think of it, twenty years is long enough for an engagement), that I finally dropped off my waterproof and my sea-sickness, and stood up behind the binnacle, and was married before eight bells that very morning—ring and all. Duncan produced it from a small case, where he had carried it in his waistcoat pocket for the whole twenty years.

"I could never bear to put the little thing away," said he looking at it tenderly.

The next day we came to port, with the sun shining and our flag flying. There was a welcoming of friends on the shore, and a glad hurrying to and fro.

Among the rest was an instant's meeting of Miss Armour's lips on my cheek, and a little clinging of her hand in mine, the vanishing of a smile—and she was gone like the flash of a firefly, out of my sight forever. But wherever she is, and however she fares, she has the daily blessing of two middle-aged hearts, whose way to each other she unconsciously lighted.—[Chambers Journal.]

How Mrs. Perkins Cured her Husband of the "Club" Fever.

Clubs are generally supposed to be longed for by the young, but they have found their way to Pigeon Holes, and my husband has joined them!

A young sprig by the name of Jacksnips, he came here from Boston early in the summer, to board, and shoot, and fish, though what he calculated to shoot is a mystery. There haint no game but woodchucks, what has cut my cranberry beans all up; and to my sart knowledge all he has shot sense he's been here is the Widder Peaselee's gobbler, and Sarah Ann Jenkins' speckled Thomas cat.

But Jacksnips he introduced the idea of clubs, consarn him! He sed a club was a place where men that their wives scolded, and their chimney smoked, and their babies cried, could meet and while away the tedious hours in converse sweet with simpersthetic soles!

Jacksnips is considerable of a college bred man—his father used to be the progenitor in Yale College, and swept the floors, and built the fires, so, of course, his son is a great scholar.

I did not know nothing about the club when they first begun, it I had I should have set my foot down to once, so far as Jonathan was concerned. It seems that about a dozen men of Pigeon Holes met over in the sullen kitchen of Binkley's store, and organized—and Jonathan was among 'em.

Warn't I mad when I found it out, and knowed that Jonathan was among 'em? Well, I rather guess so! Everybody that knows yer Aunt Jerushy, is well aware that she's got a temper like a lamb that's been brought up on the bottle, when she haint been imposed upon, but anybody that undertakes the little job of imposing upon her will be likely to find all he can manage afore he gets through.

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case he should be bring home dead, and have to be laid out. It's allers best, you know, to be prepared for what ever may happen. A person never knows what may come along. All to once, just at four midnight, I heard sumthin' a scratching to the door. I thought first it was Jones' cat that has been round our siller for to skin the milk all summer, and I armed myself with the mop, and crept out to the door, determined to settle that animal right on the spot. I unlocked the door just as cautious as ever I could—ris the mop, and was just going to let drive, when I heard a kind of silly laugh, that sounded some thing like Jonathan's, coming up from the regions of the door-step.

I set up my specks, and looked close, and shure enuf there was a man stretched out on the steps with his legs in the rain water tub, and his two hands a-fund in the tubs that my woodbine was a running up over. I grabbed him by the shoulders and set him up into his feet.

"Mrs. Perkins," sez he, "what upon—upon a'ith have you done with—with the key-hole?"

"Why, Jonathan Perkins?" sez I, "do my eyes deceive me? is this you? and be you—gracious sith! be you drunk?"

"Drunk!" sez he, straight'n'g himself up, and falling over back-wards across the scraper; "drunk! Jerushy! I'm—I'm 'mazed! I am! Me drunk! when I haint seen anything stronger than spring water for a month! I'm over me with the heat—I am!—thermometer's biling—and some infernal scamp has stole the key-hole! confound him!"

I was canmost transfigured! To think that this stuttering figure was the parolier of my buzzum was too much for me, and it so fur overcame me that I lost my self-control and let that mop-handle come down onto Jonathan to such an extent that he left off stuttering and went to fighting with fists and feet and toe nails!

I managed though to get him into the house and to bed, though he insisted onto going with his boots on, and the boots was so concerned tight over them corns of his'n, that I couldn't get 'em off. So I put his feet into a chair, and tied 'em fast there with the clothes line, so he couldn't hist 'em round onto the sheets, and there I left him.

He slept powerful?—it was ten o'clock the next day afore he waked up, and then he was sick at his stomach, and cross as a lobster being biled! Along toward night he came round agin, and owned up where he'd been, and promised never to go any more. But he broke his promise for two nights, which made three in all that he'd been to the club, and the fourth night my resolution was took.

Ichabod Turner he came along early that night and asked Jonathan if he didn't want to go ceiling. And they took their fishing poles and they departed.

I knowed well enough where they had gone, and about twelve o'clock that night I dressed myself up in a white petticoat and night gown, and taking a sheet and a bean pole I set sail for Binkley's siller kitchen.

There was a brisk light in there, and sounds of huffer and sizzing coming out, and afore I'd waited a spell the corns broke up, and out come a dozen or more men, and Jonathan and Ichabod among 'em! I kept in the shadow of the fences till just off the old graveyard where Jonathan's grand-in and grandmam is buried, and Jonathan and Ichabod they was a staggering along a having business on both sides of the road to come, and a singing in chorus "Champion Charlie is my Name." And there is about as much sing to Jonathan Perkins as there is to a bob-tailed bantam rooster.

Suddenly, just as they'd got against the graveyard, I jumped off over the fence, histed my sheet onto the bean pole high over my head, and letting off the most awful groan that ever you heard, I stepped rite out in front of 'em.

You'd ort to have been there and seed the result. I wouldn't have believed that any mortal so drunk as Jonathan was, could ever have made tracks so fast as he did. It was one of the wonders of the age, and Ichabod he kept fully up to him; and I followed behind a waving of my sheet and bean pole, and a cheering of 'em on. Just afore they got to our house they kinder missed the track and ran off the side of the road, down over a bank wall, and Ichabod he fell over Jonathan, and Jonathan he blundered and both of 'em went into the ditch that Mose White had dug to drain the siller.

When they landed there they both set up a howl, and our dog Towser he heard 'em and cum plunging down hill rite onto 'em.

I had to throw away my sheet and pole, and go to the rescue, and by the time I'd got things separated a little Mose White and Ichabod they had arriv, and I went home and changed my clothes.

A maiden lady being asked why she had never married, replied that she had never seen the man for whom she was willing to get up three meals a day for forty years.

"Sir," said to me an frate little gentleman, of about four feet eleven inches. "I would have you know, sir, that I have been well brought up." I looked down on him. "Possibly," said I, "but you haven't been brought up far."

The following notice is posted conspicuously in a newspaper-office on West: "Shut the door; and as soon as you have done talking business, serve your month the same way."